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SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE.

Anatomische Litteratur in Amerika. I. Wilder's System der Nomenclatur. Von THOMAS DWIGHT in Boston. Separatabdruck aus *Ergebnisse der Anatomie und Entwicklungsgeschichte*. Wiesbaden. 1897.

It is now some twenty-six years since Dr. Wilder commenced his crusade against current anatomical nomenclature, and during that time his activity has been great. Firmly imbued with the idea that reform is urgently required, he has been prolific in inventing new terms and urgent in pressing their acceptance upon the scientific public. Although his following has not been numerous, most scholars being repelled by his fantastic terms and his defects of literary form, yet by persistence and iteration he has made himself a veritable force in the anatomical literature of this country, a force that must be reckoned with whenever any question of terminology is to be considered.

The paper here presented to the German reading public by the well known professor of anatomy in Harvard University is an attempt to correct certain misapprehensions that have arisen in Germany with regard to the views of Dr. Wilder and the position he occupies. In order to explain how these misapprehensions arose it will be necessary to touch briefly upon certain matters that, while familiar to those interested in nomenclature, are not widely known to the public at large.

When, in 1889, the Anatomische Gesellschaft, the principal foreign society of anatomists, appointed a committee to consider the subject of nomenclature it was natural that Dr. Wilder should be consulted. Several American scientific societies had appointed similar committees,* and in these Dr. Wilder took great interest, obtaining from them, either directly or indirectly, some brief and very moderate reports not antagonistic to his views. These he forwarded in considerable numbers to the German committee, together with some publications of his own. It seems that he did not at all realize the ignorance that naturally prevails in Germany as to scientific work in this country, and that, although he

had no official standing whatever that would authorize him to speak for American anatomists, he created the impression that he represented some American committee that indorsed and supported all his somewhat revolutionary ideas.

Under this misapprehension the Anatomische Gesellschaft made the following formal protest against what they assumed was the American scheme:

"The Anatomische Gesellschaft thinks it ought to take a stand against the attempts of the American Committee on Nomenclature. It recognizes the usefulness of as short names as possible and the aptness of some suggestions which have come from America. It protests, however, against the inconsiderate use of mononyms and the consequent radical remodeling of anatomical language as it has existed hitherto. To follow the American committee in this course is forbidden to the Anatomische Gesellschaft by the acknowledged laws of general language formation as well as by a regard for the historical development of our own science. Should the construction of a peculiar anatomical terminology make progress in America along these lines, an impassable chasm would be formed between those who pursue anatomical studies and those who devote themselves to medicine, and thus coöperation in scientific work would be deeply disturbed."*

Again, when the list of terms adopted by the Gesellschaft came to be published, it was accompanied by some rather tart remarks by Professor His concerning the 'American committee and its very zealous member, Mr. Wilder,' who had 'already published a lot of small papers and pamphlets.'

In consequence of his strictures there ensued a rather acrimonious correspondence between Dr. Wilder and Professor His, in which both parties appear to have lost their tempers, and from which no distinct advantage accrued to science.†

Dr. Dwight proceeds to give an accurate account of the American committees, their recommendations and the official connection of Dr. Wilder with them, showing that they were in no way responsible for his acts and had never recommended the comprehensive remodeling of anatomical terminology that he advocates.

* *Anatomischer Anzeiger*, Ergänzungsheft zum Xte Band, 1895, p. 162.

† Published by Wilder in his *Neural Terms*, *Jour. of Comp. Neurology*, 1896.

* The American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Neurological Society, and the Association of American Anatomists.

Some of the peculiarities of the Wilder system are then briefly discussed, attention being called to its disregard of the ordinary principles of language formation as exemplified by : 1st. The mutilation of words, as by using 'alinjection,' for injection with alcohol; chippocamp, for hippocampus major, etc. 2d. The substitution of monomial terms ('mononyms,' Wilder) for those sanctioned by long usage and historic precedent. In recent publications we are asked, for example, to say 'restis,' for restiform body; 'praecribrum,' for anterior perforated space; and 'quadrigeminum,' for corpora quadrigemina. In this matter the majority of anatomists will probably agree with Professor His that "the contraction of several words into one may under certain circumstances be an improvement, but as the conciseness of a telegram may lead to its obscurity, so terms used in this way may, from their very brevity, demand a special explanation for their comprehension."* Dr. Dwight cites, with approval, the writer in *Nature* who styles this system a scientific Volapük. Dr. Wilder himself recognizes the necessity for furnishing a vocabulary for his peculiar tongue, as is done with the artificial language just cited, for his longer essays are accompanied by a chapter of definitions, and his shorter ones have numerous parenthetic interpolations for explaining the meaning of his terms.

The degrading influence that such inartistic curtailments must have upon ordinary literary style is pointed out by Dr. Dwight. We notice in a recent publication from Dr. Wilder's pen that 'anatomic teachers' are mentioned, by which grisly term he apparently means teachers of anatomy.

Dr. Dwight suggests that some of the oddities of this system have, doubtless, arisen because of the peculiar isolation of Dr. Wilder from those who are using human anatomy practically and who, therefore, feel the necessity of preserving unbroken the traditions of anatomical speech. Medicine and surgery have never been taught at Cornell University, and Professor Wilder's chair is not that of human anatomy.

The general verdict of foreign anatomists is

* Die Anatomische Nomenclatur, p. 7.

strongly against these innovations, and is well voiced by the following temperate and wise rebuke administered by the veteran Kölliker, who was Chairman of the Committee on Nomenclature of the Anatomische Gesellschaft:

"I regard the anatomical nomenclature that has emanated from America in recent years as a complete failure, and so inappropriate that it is impossible for me to read articles based thereon. One can hardly ask a scholar who has received a regular training to accept quietly the many barbarisms of this nomenclature, such as *metatela*, *metaplexus*, *autiplexus*, *diaplexus*, *ectocinerea*, *cephalad*, *caudad*, *dorsad*, *cephalo-dorsad*, *ventro-caudad*, *dorso-caudad*, *hemi-cerebrum*, etc., and to turn back and find out the meaning of a great number of other terms, such as *terma*, *proton*, *pero*, *prosoterma*, *diaterma*, *supraplexus*, *aula*, *alba*, *crista*, *diacoele*, *mesocoele*, etc. As the oldest German anatomist, I may, perhaps, be permitted to advise my American colleagues not to proceed farther upon this path lest it might happen that, in the course of a few years, the anatomists on this and on that side of the water no longer understand each other and all scientific interchange of ideas become impossible."*

Dr. Dwight protests against the designation 'American' as applied to the Wilder system, and closes his too brief article as follows:

"As regards the future it may be that an unexpected prophecy may be deduced from its likeness to Volapük. That pseudo-speech has fallen, apparently never to rise again. Whether the Wilder system as a whole will outlive the loss of the great influence and enthusiasm of its author, which must naturally occur in the course of human events, is very doubtful; it is certain, however, that whatever good there is in it will survive beyond that day which we hope may still be far distant."

FRANK BAKER.

A Description of Minerals of Commercial Value.

By D. M. BARRINGER. New York, Wiley & Sons. 1897. First edition. Pp. 168.

Barringer's 'Minerals of Commercial Value' is a small volume bound in flexible cloth issued

* Kölliker, A. 'Handbuch der Gewebelehre des Menschen.' 6te Aufl. Band II., p. 814.